

REMARKS

Claims 1-12, 14 and 16-22 stand rejected under USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kaufman in view of Yoshikawa.

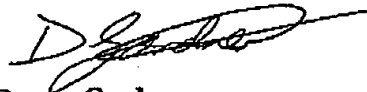
Claims 13 and 15 are objected to as being dependent on a rejected base claim.

Applicant has re-written claim 14 to include the limitations of claim 15, namely "*at least a portion of said at least one exposed surface comprising a layer of Titanium Nitride*". Claim 15 has been cancelled to avoid redundancy and claims 16-18 have been amended to recite that the electrically conducting non-oxidising material is Titanium Nitride.

As Examiner has indicated that claim 15 would be allowable if re-written in independent form, Applicant submits that new claim 14, which recites all of the limitations of now cancelled claim 15, is allowable. Similarly, as each of claims 16-18 also recite all of the limitations of claim 14 as amended, it is respectfully submitted that claims 16-18 are also allowable.

In light of the above, it is submitted that the claims are in order for allowance, and prompt allowance is earnestly requested. Should any issues remain outstanding, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned agent of record so that the case may proceed expeditiously to allowance.

Respectfully submitted,



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Agent for Applicant

Date : 18 November 2003